

Message Text

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70

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 /081 W

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R 110953Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2057

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2114

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP, PFOR, XF

SUBJECT: SOWESCOM (SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES) COMMAND PLACED ON ALERT

REF: MANILA A-341 OF 12/22/75

1. ACCORDING MANILA PRESS, SOWESCOM (MILITARY COMMAND WHICH COVERS SOUTHWESTERN MINDANAO AND SULU ARCHIPELAGO) HAS BEEN PLACED ON "FULL ALERT" IN ANTICIPATION OF INCREASED MUSLIM REBEL ACTIVITY. SOWESCOM COMMANDER ADMIRAL ESPALDON TOLD PUBLIC AUDIENCE ON FEB 10 THAT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS REVEALED PLANS OF MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) TO STAGE SERIES OF KIDNAPPINGS, HIJACKINGS, AMBUSHES, HOLDUPS AND BOMBINGS. HE SAID ATTACKS WOULD NOT SPARE CIVILIANS. PURPOSE, ACCORDING ESPALDON, IS TO GAIN AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE BEFORE THE ISLAMIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR ISTANBUL IN MAY. ESPALDON SAID THAT MORE THAN 15,000 REBELS HAVE RESPONDED TO GOP SURRENDER APPEALS LEAVING ONLY 2,000
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ACTIVE. (FOR EMBASSY VIEWS ON SUCH EXAGGERATED CLAIMS,

SEE REFAIR.)

2. COMMENT: THIS IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL RECENT INDICATIONS THAT BOTH REBELS AND GOVERNMENT (IN WHAT MAY BECOME ANNUAL EXERCISE) ARE GEARING UP FOR INCREASED ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO INFLUENCE THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE. FIGHTING HAS APPARENTLY BEEN ON THE INCREASE WITH RECENT ACTIVITY REPORTED FROM COTABATO SECTOR AND ZAMBOANGA PROVINCES (SCENE OF SEVERAL NASTY BUS AMBUSHINGS) AS WELL AS FROM PERENNIALY TROUBLED HINTERLAND OF JOLO. SOME OF THIS APPEARS DUE TO REBEL INITIATIVE WHILE OTHER ACTION UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENTS RESPONSE TO CONTINUING GOVERNMENT MILITARY PRESSURE. GOP IS ALSO LIKELY TO INTENSIFY PUBLICITY OF ALLEGED REBEL DEFECTIONS AND RENEW QUASI-DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES (SUCH AS LAST YEAR'S ZAMBOANGA PEACE TALKS) AS INSTANBUL CONFERENCE DRAWS NEAR.
SULLIVAN

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NNN

Message Attributes

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04 MAY 2006

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